1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31



the character of the man; in very fact, it at the same time both measures and makes the character of the woman. Among other privileges bestowed on the bride during the probationary period are those of receiving the most intimate attentions from the clanfellows of the groom; and these are noteworthy as suggestions of a vestigial polyandry or adelphogamy. At the close of the year the probation ends in a feast provided by the probationer, who thereupon enters the bride's jacal as a perpetual guest of unlimited personal privileges (subject to tribal custom); while the bride passes from a half-wanton heyday into the duller routine of matronly existence.

These details were elicited at Costa Rica in 1894 through methodical inquiries made in connection with the linguistic collection. This collection was made with the cooperation of Señor Alvemar Leon as Spanish-English interpreter, together with Mashém and (commonly) the clanmother known as Juana María. Usually quite a group of Seri matrons with two or three warriors were gathered about, and to these Mashém frequently appealed for advice and verification, while they constantly expressed approval or disapproval of questions and replies, as gathered through Mashém's words and mien, in such manner as to afford a fair index of their habitual thought—e. g., when the Seri vernacular for "twins" was obtained and the inquiry was extended (by normal association of ideas) to the term for "triplets", Mashém collapsed into moody silence while the rest of the group decamped incontinently with horror-stricken countenances—thereby suggesting cautious subsequent inquiry, and the discovery that triplets are deemed evil monsters and their production a capital crime. It was in one of the earlier conferences that the first intimations concerning the unusual marital customs were incidentally brought out; the Caucasian interpreter and bystanders were diverted by the naive reference to the moral test, but their expressions were hastily checked lest the native informants might be startled and rendered secretive; then, during two later conferences, when Mashém and several matrons were freely participating in the proceedings, the line of inquiry was so turned as to touch on various aspects of the marriage custom and bring out all essential features; so that much confidence is reposed in the accuracy of the details.[1] The confidence in the verity of the customs was such as not to be impaired seriously by the fact that no records of coincident moral tests were known in the voluminous literature of marriage and its concomitants; nor was it shaken by the still weightier fact that none of the experienced ethnologists to whom inquiries were addressed during ensuing months were acquainted with parallel customs—indeed the only shadow of corroboration thus obtained came in the form of references to the widespread requirement of continence in war and ceremonies,

[1] It may be observed that Kolonia, when visited in January, 1895, failed to corroborate the descriptions of Mashém and the matrons, but his failure occasioned little surprise for the reason that he has not lived with his bride since early boyhood, and is equally unacquainted (or unconcerned) concerning the mythic ceremonies, and even the taboos of the tribe.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930) 1931 NU31 Seri NU31



on a string around his neck, which he got from his father. It is a two inch length of cane, with a wooden stopper, containing a white powder of stone (?). A little of this powder put into fresh water, brings dew; into salt water, rain. 778 781

Similarly, Chico Romero wears on his neck a tiny spool-shaped object of wood, scarcely 2 cm. long, with notched ends. When he dies, this will burst; or rather, it seems that a larger object of the same shape, which another man keeps, will burst with thunder.

To get luck, a man paints a "cross" on his forehead, breast, and "heel" and goes to sleep. Then a dream comes in which he gets what he is thinking of. Sometimes the dream comes true; sometimes not. Some dreams are lies. 787

The soul (*alma*), he'ë'sax, is all over the body and is noiseless. It is "nearly the same as blood": when the blood is lost, the soul goes. Some say that when the Seri die they are reborn in the north as Cocopa. 774 775

There seem to be no special beliefs or practises about twins. 845

Antiso'ma (— Montezuma?) is the size of a child, has a beard, a golden staff, white clothes inside and black outside. He lives in a cave. Once he tried to take a young man away with him in order to dress him nicely. Later the young man's relatives went with him to find Antiso'ma again, but could not. 776

### *Songs*

*Toad* was a woman who had only a breech-clout and wanted a cotton shirt. She said she would give herself to a man for one. 533

*Coyote* was a Seri once.

*Pinacate* (dung-beetle?) wanted a bride and was jealous about her.

*Colaprieta*, the black-bellied ant, also was a man and wanted to marry the hokó'ctim ant. He was making a house of grass for her. She was afraid of him, and her relatives took her away.

### *Games*

The four-tube-hiding game is played with canes open at one end. These canes are: blackened all over, old man; unpainted, old woman; blackened at one end, boy; blackened in the middle, girl. The boy and girl are made by slitting off slivers on two sides. The names serve as designations only; the differences between the tubes do not enter into the game. The player with the tubes turns around, puts a piece of twig into one, fills them all with sand, and throws them before his opponent, who tries to empty the twig from the *third* tube he selects. If so, he wins the canes, that is, the right to play. If the twig is in the first tube emptied, he loses 10; if in the second, 6; if in the fourth, 4. Counters are little natural shell disks. 524

semi-darkness.

Soon two little boys joined the dance, stepping up and down in the sand. Lighted only by the flickering flames of the driftwood fires on the shores of this mysterious and dreaded isle, the soft murmur of the sea as a refrain to the wild chanting, the weird circling of glittering eyes, and wild dark faces, presented a scene of uncanny and savage fascination witnessed by white men probably for the first time.

After each stanza there was a short rest. The singing was similar to most other tribal chanting.

Bob made the remark that the girl was old enough to be broken in by the old Chief. I said, "How?"

He said, when a girl thirteen or fourteen has her menses, the Chief takes her and goes through the family act. This is called 'breaking her in'. She is then eligible for marriage. A young man desiring marriage has to purchase the girl by giving the father a boat or rifle, both being necessary to the Seri's existence and protection. At the wedding they have sort of a fiesta and much mescal is drunk, which properly solemnizes a wedding.

When a girl has a baby it usually comes very naturally and easily, but I remember one girl's first baby was three days in coming, and she suffered a great deal. This was on a subsequent trip. She was staying with many of her people on the mainland and someone asked them if they didn't want a doctor or other help. They said: No, they had one. It was a Medicine Man who chanted over the girl and dug hollows in the sand to fit her heels into. He said that the legs had to be kept apart. This was all he did. But ordinarily there is no trouble, and if a baby is born at noon the mother is up and doing, and cooks supper for her lord and master. The men treat their wives with kindness and each shares with the other any delicacy.

In Seriland domestic duties are reversed from the usual Indian methods. The men get the water and the women get the wood. This consists mostly of driftwood gathered along the shore, and it is a picturesque sight to see a string of women and girls bringing in loads of wood in baskets on their heads at sunset.

There are no plural marriages, but sometimes when a Chief is old, or rather when his wife is old and can have no more babies, he can take a younger woman as his wife. The present Chief is getting old now, almost too old to break in the girls, so they may get a younger man. This might be called the perquisites of office. He takes the cream.

They hunt lice in the head and eat them. This is said to increase the amorous desires. The penis of the male turtle is cut out and dried. This is pounded and pulverized and placed in the food of the women. This is said to create a desire for a man and the family act.